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# The Yale Political Monthly

*An Undergraduate Publication*

Clinton, Consociation, and  
Northern Ireland

*Power-sharing and the peace process*

Learning to be an American

*Education and citizenship in modern America*

The American Muslim  
Political Renaissance

*Why and how American Muslims are  
taking action*

Revolution Misdiagnosed

*Michael Lind and the 'rebirth' of the right*

VOLUME 18, NUMBER 1 ~ DECEMBER 1996



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We would also like to apologize to Mr. Vikram Mansharamani, whose last name is spelled as above, and not as printed in our April issue.

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# The Yale Political Monthly

## An Undergraduate Publication

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DECEMBER 1996

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## 4

*President Clinton is likely to prove instrumental in determining the course of future negotiations.*

# Clinton, Consociation and Northern Ireland Power-sharing and the Peace Process Kat Gilbreath

In the aftermath of the IRA bombings and the resumption of paramilitary activity that ended the ceasefire, the situation in Northern Ireland has reached a critical turning point. As a consequence, the reelection of President Clinton is likely to prove instrumental in determining the course of future negotiations between Loyalists, Nationalists, and interested third parties, including nonaligned groups. Clinton's vocal advocacy of reconciliation is such that the prospect of its sudden removal—with the potential election of Bob Dole—would have had a drastic effect on Anglo-Irish relations, radically affecting the state of affairs in Northern Ireland.

Outright White House support for Irish demands against Great Britain on the Irish Question has been the exception rather than the rule in the history of Anglo-American affairs. Until recently, the only genuine example was President Andrew Johnson's courting of the New York City Irish-American vote

in the 1866 midterm congressional elections when he allowed the United States to be used as a "fundraising center and staging ground for an Irish-American invasion of Canada."<sup>1</sup> For more than a century after Johnson, the Irish in America commanded little political clout in Washington. It was during this period, however, that Britain's 'Irish Question' deepened, and the violence of its clashes escalated. The partitioning of the province of Ulster in 1921 under the policy of Irish Home Rule left six counties in the province under British rule and was the real cause of the sectarian violence that continued without abeyance until the 1994 ceasefire. It was not until Bill Clinton was elected to the White House in 1992 that the U. S. played any real part in pacifying the Troubles in Northern Ireland.

Clinton's involvement in the Irish Question began during his 1992 presidential primary campaign and presented a sharp contrast to past U.S. policy. On Saint Patrick's Day of that year, President George Bush reiterated this tradition of stand-offishness to Irish leaders in

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Washington. Despite expressing a personal interest in the Troubles, he declared that neither he nor the U. S. was in any position to "dictate a solution." Those involved would have to "reach an accord among themselves."<sup>2</sup> This stance later attracted condemnation from Rep. Joseph Kennedy (D-Mass.) and Boston Mayor Ray Flynn, and Bush's policy on Northern Ireland was made an issue in the presidential primaries as Clinton campaigned in Connecticut and New York. Clinton attended an Irish-American forum on April 5, two days before the New York primary, and agreed to "appoint a special envoy to Northern Ireland, to pressure the British on human rights violations there, and to issue a visa to Gerry Adams."<sup>3</sup> (Gerry Adams is the president of Sinn Fein, the political arm of the IRA, and had previously been denied a visa to the U.S. for 20 years.) Towards the end of the presidential campaign, in late October, Clinton wrote a letter with Nancy Soderberg, one of his foreign policy advisors and a former aide to Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.), in which he pledged that:

... a Clinton administration will take a more active role in talks on Northern Ireland and tell the British to reduce job discrimination against Catholics there and to establish more effective safeguards against the wanton use of lethal force and against further collision between the security forces and Protestant paramilitary groups.<sup>4</sup>

True to his word, Clinton upheld his campaign promise with respect to

the conduct of foreign policy in Northern Ireland.

Shortly after the election, President Clinton met with Irish Prime Minister Albert Reynolds on St. Patrick's Day in 1993, and received some advice he had not expected. Reynolds told Clinton that he should not proceed with his campaign promise to send a 'special peace envoy' to Northern Ireland, stating that such an envoy would "not be helpful at this time."<sup>5</sup> Because Clinton was under increasing Irish-American pressure to achieve visible results in shaping the peace process in Northern Ireland, Reynolds offered, as a concession, to publicly announce that Clinton was "acting on the advice of the Taoiseach" (the Irish Prime Minister); in return, Clinton offered any help he could give in the future.<sup>6</sup>

Almost a year later, Reynolds took Clinton up on his offer. Since his appointment in 1983 as President of Sinn Fein, Gerry Adams had been barred from visiting the U. S. on the grounds of his "espousal of political violence."<sup>7</sup> He was invited to speak at a conference on Northern Ireland in New York in February 1994 by the National Committee on Foreign Policy, but the British Government pressured the U. S. not to give him a visa, partly because of their fear that Adams would actively solicit funds in America. Encouraged by Reynolds and John Hume, the head of the mainstream nationalist Social Democratic and Labour Party in Northern Ireland, who had strong contacts among the Irish-American lobby in Washing-

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*In return, Clinton offered any help he could give in the future.*



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*Clinton  
and Smith  
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national-  
ist.*

ton, Clinton granted Gerry Adams a 48-hour visa to visit the U.S. Sinn Fein saw this as a "signal victory."<sup>8</sup>

Pivotal in shaping and executing Clinton's Northern Ireland policy was Jean Kennedy Smith, who was nominated by Clinton as American Ambassador to Ireland on St. Patrick's Day 1993. Criticized for being too 'pro-Green,' Smith set out to prove otherwise. During a 1993 visit to Dublin, she arranged to meet with a representative group of Northern Protestants and devoted much time to cultivating this relationship in subsequent months.<sup>9</sup> By setting up bipartisan contacts and ties to both sides, a third party—in the form of American mediators—was able to ease the standoff. Before Clinton's presidency, little progress had been made between the two factions, as neither was willing to stand audience to the other. It was only through the use of outside semi-neutral parties that concessions and agreements seemed possible.

The final, and most critical, part of Clinton's Irish campaign involved the formation of a framework for all-party negotiations to take place on "the creation of a peaceful, new-look Ireland."<sup>10</sup> In order to prevent the alienation of the Unionists and to induce their participation, John Major and Reynolds agreed that the talks would focus more on 'joint management' than 'joint sovereignty.' Britain wished to move slowly in these maneuvers because of her ties to the Unionists, but Sinn Fein had the opposite idea; thus, Reynolds was determined to act as the conduit

between them. The failure of the ceasefire can be traced to events which took place during this time period: Britain's stalling in order to pacify the Unionists, coupled with the failure to incorporate Sinn Fein in the talks, ultimately led to their downfall.

A significant leap towards peace was achieved when Clinton and Smith worked together to grant another visa—this time to Joe Cahill, an Irish nationalist who had founded NORAI, the organization of Irish-American Sinn Fein activists and fund-raisers. Clinton and Smith determined that Cahill was the only man appropriate to brief NORAI members on the terms of the imminent ceasefire, terms which Reynolds had negotiated between Unionists and Sinn Fein. Clinton and Reynolds believed that such a briefing was advisable before the public announcement of the ceasefire to prevent alienation of American Sinn Fein supporters, who are an important constituency in the Nationalist movement because of the financial support they provide. Once the visa was secured and just before Cahill arrived in the U. S. on August 30, 1994, a triumphant Reynolds read the full text of the IRA ceasefire announcement over the phone to John Major and Bill Clinton.<sup>11</sup>

Although the ceasefire lasted only 18 months, it is the only substantive move made towards a lasting peace in Northern Ireland in the centuries-old Anglo-Irish conflict. The breakdown of the ceasefire came as a surprise to Clinton, although with hindsight it seems that





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it was inevitable due to the exclusion of Sinn Fein from negotiations. Negotiations for further all-party talks are currently underway, and the role that Clinton and his administration could again play in aiding such efforts is potentially decisive.

Although the conflict in Northern Ireland is frequently viewed as insoluble, a wide range of solutions have been proposed. One potential solution which is often overlooked is consociational democracy. This concept was developed in the hope of providing governmental structures to allow deeply divided societies to function stably, facilitating what is known as 'elite accomodation',<sup>12</sup> and has proved successful in small European countries such as Holland, Belgium, Switzerland and Austria.

Consociation is based on the premise that deeply divided societies can be brought into manageable civic equilibrium by guaranteeing a share of governmental power to the political elites of all major parties, and then incorporating the mass of their popular support into a system of proportional representation and coalition governments. The primary distinguishing feature of consociation is cooperation among such elites. In Northern Ireland, it is clear that this must be the point from which the peace process starts: political leaders of Nationalist and Loyalist organizations must be willing to compromise and cooperate. From there, the less prominent members of both sides can slowly become involved in a system in which all factions enjoy representation and a voice in the government.

The depth of the social, political, religious, and economic cleavages in Northern Ireland make some form of consociation possibly the only workable candidate for repairing the region's deeply entrenched antagonisms and inequalities. Consociation is an 'artificial' type of democracy because no 'rules of the game' exist for it, at least to the degree of explicitness that political guidelines possess under more rigid dispensations :

...the rules of the game are a part of the "role culture" developed by and instilled in the elite, and not of the mass culture. Furthermore, they consist of a mixture of procedural rules and general orientations toward politics and do not have much substantive content. It must be emphasized that the seven rules [of consociation] are unwritten, informal, and implicit. No convenient book of rules exists; they have to be inferred from the actions of the leaders especially under conditions of political tension.<sup>14</sup>

The seven implicit 'rules' of consociation are:

- 1) Politics are not regarded as a game, but as "a serious means to a serious end."<sup>15</sup>
- 2) Political elites agree to disagree and "the fundamental convictions of [all other parties] must be tolerated, if not respected."<sup>16</sup>
- 3) Crucial issues are handled via 'summit diplomacy' by the elites.
- 4) Representation and allocation of resources are determined through proportionality.
- 5) Neutralization of potentially divisive issues is achieved through depoliticization, which frequently entails "the resort to legal and constitutional

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*Consociation is an 'artificial' type of democracy because no 'rules of the game' exist for it.*



# 8

*The transition to semi-autonomous consociation is of vital importance.*

- principles."<sup>17</sup>
- 6) The elites' efforts toward political accommodation of all parties avails itself of an environment free from the intrusions of the media; secrecy is a crucial aspect of the 'summit diplomacy' mentioned above.
  - 7) The right to govern is the singular responsibility of the highest rulers and elites and the parties in parliament must cede to them in some degree the job of governing.

The fundamental principles of consociation—the accommodation of elites from both Protestant and Catholic blocs, proportionality, and power of minority veto—are the only means available with which to create a viable and stable democracy in Northern Ireland.

In fact, Northern Ireland has had its own semi-autonomous governing body in the past: the Stormont parliament, collapsed in 1972 with the imposition of direct rule from London. Critics of consociation in Northern Ireland argue that the failure of Stormont should be viewed as a signal that such a system would not be able to address itself to a conflict in which neither side is willing to accept any compromise. However, no other potential forms of governance appear to be equipped with the capacity for addressing the fundamental requirements of both sides. Continued British rule of Northern Ireland will not lead to peace due to the large and increasing number of Irish Catholic nationals in the province, and a sudden reunification of the North with the Irish Republic would

be highly inflammatory due to the majority status of Protestant Loyalists in Ulster. Instead, permanent or temporary semi-autonomous consociation, with power shared between Protestant and Catholic elites and between the Irish Republic and Great Britain, appears to be the only feasible alternative. Although the ceasefire lasted only a short while, the fact that it took place at all is a sign that the disposition of the parties and the people of Northern Ireland today has shifted significantly from that of Northern Ireland at the time of the Stormont parliament. In 1972, the prospect of all-party talks could not even have been imagined.

The transition to semi-autonomous consociation is of vital importance, and outside intervention could play a key role in this phase. Fortunately, President Clinton and his administration have already established the ties with both sides that are necessary to provide effective aid in establishing the framework for all-party talks during which a stable consociational democracy in Northern Ireland can be discussed and planned.

Although peace in Northern Ireland is far from imminent, at no other time have its prospects seemed greater. President Clinton's committed involvement in Northern Ireland has played a key role in moving all parties closer to compromise over the past four years; one can only hope that his reelection constitutes a further step towards ending the deep-seated "physical force tradition in Irish life."<sup>18</sup>



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- <sup>1</sup> Joseph O'Grady, "An Irish Policy Born in the USA," *Foreign Affairs* 75.3 (1996): 2.
- <sup>2</sup> O'Grady 2.
- <sup>3</sup> O'Grady 3.
- <sup>4</sup> O'Grady 3.
- <sup>5</sup> Brendan O'Brien, *The Long War: The IRA and Sinn Fein, 1985 to Today* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1995): 309.
- <sup>6</sup> O'Brien 309.
- <sup>7</sup> O'Brien 309.
- <sup>8</sup> O'Brien 310.
- <sup>9</sup> O'Brien 372.

- <sup>10</sup> O'Brien 374.
- <sup>11</sup> O'Brien 378.
- <sup>12</sup> Simon Hix, "The Study of the European Community: The Challenge to Comparative Politics," *West European Politics* 17.1 (1994): 20.
- <sup>13</sup> Arend Lijphardt *The Politics of Accomodation* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1968): 123.
- <sup>14</sup> Lijphardt 124.
- <sup>15</sup> Lijphardt 129.
- <sup>16</sup> Tim Pat Coogan, *The IRA: A History* (Boulder, Colorado: Roberts Rinehart Publishers, 1994): 502.

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## KAPLAN



# Learning to be an American Education and Citizenship for Tomorrow Joshua Hill

"Why  
should I  
care about  
dead  
people?"

Perhaps the most challenging question I have had posed to me was by a ninth grader at New Haven's Hillhouse High School. While we were studying American history, she complained to me, "Why should I care about dead people?" There are many glib answers to that question (such as the response I gave at the time), but they do not fully come to terms with the question. Differently worded, this question essentially asks, what is the value of an education in U.S. history? Public education has many—some have argued too many—goals, but, as articulated by the Founding Fathers of our country, its most fundamental is to teach students to become effective citizens. Citizenship is more than being born on this soil (although that is how the Fourteenth Amendment defines it) and it is more than the uninhibited exercise of Constitutionally guaranteed liberties. Procedurally, citizenship may be based on such abstractions, but in a philosophical sense citizenship involves the ability to understand and navigate within a national culture that, no matter how diverse,

*Joshua Hill is a Sophomore in Timothy Dwight and a Staff Writer for the YPM.*

is bonded by some sort of common goals.

The Founding Fathers and the early educational crusaders thought as much. It has been suggested that, in keeping with the traditions of classical Western thought, they tried to design a democratic government that would refute the criticisms of democracy as put forth by the ancients. One of the most poignant examples of such criticism is related by the Greek historian Thucydides. Thucydides presents the revolution on the island of Corcyra as an illustration of the effects of a loss of shared civil understanding. As the conflict between the leaders of the masses and those of the aristocrats progressed, Thucydides explains that, "[w]ords had to change in their ordinary meanings and to take those which were now given them."<sup>1</sup> As a result of this breakdown in the understanding of civil norms, "...human nature, always rebelling against the law and now its master, gladly showed itself ungoverned in passion, above all respect for justice, and the enemy of all superiority."<sup>2</sup>

In order for democracy to function, all of its citizens must speak, in figurative terms, the same language. The government of



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Corcyra failed because its political discourse became unintelligible, even though as it was spoken in a common Greek. When the meaning of words becomes unstable across political, social, or economic groups, none of the debate and compromise essential to democracy can be achieved. Aware of this, some of the Founding Fathers and early advocates of public education proposed a common system of schooling that would help overcome the various barriers that exist between groups of citizens.<sup>3</sup>

Over the last two centuries, changes in America have led both towards and away from this goal. The rise of meritocracy and the expansion of educational opportunities for nearly all Americans during the post-World War II era has dramatically increased public exposure to American history. In 1940, the majority (nearly 75%) of American adults age 25 and older had fewer than 12 years of education, and fewer than 10% had four or more years of college.<sup>4</sup> By 1994, however, it is estimated that nearly 81% of adults had at least four years of high school and 22% had at least four years of college education.<sup>5</sup> This incredible diffusion of knowledge, particularly of cultural and historical knowledge, which occurred after the second World War played a crucial part in the social upheavals of the 1960's. During this decade, campus-based protest movements challenged shibboleths such as segregation and elitism in American government (especially the foreign policy establishment) that had stood uncontested for too long.

America's 85,000-odd public schools are not, of course, unblemished drivers of social change and enlightenment. Rather, after creating the most educated citizenry in American history, they have fallen prey to numerous problems. Demographic and economic changes, such as an increasingly unequal distribution of wealth, income stagnation, and racial segregation in the inner cities have challenged the ability of the public school system to continue its tradition of success.<sup>6</sup> Problems that were once considered familial responsibilities are today the responsibilities of public schools, which now provide counselors, social workers, and a host of other social services that were not a part of the provision of education in the past. These services play a critical role in today's public schools, where 63% of teachers report that "the attitudes and habits my students bring to class greatly reduce their chances for academic success."<sup>7</sup> While these services in themselves may be necessary, one must criticize the societal mentality that has made schools responsible for providing them. Public schools cannot be expected to fulfill their traditional role of educating citizens if they are also required to administer social services in order to try to solve problems which are beyond their ability to control.

In recent times, the paramount challenge facing public schools is reversing America's relative economic decline. While some of these economic concerns are grounded in reality, others seem to be greatly exaggerated. For ex-



Once the necessity of increasing the emphasis on U.S. history in public schools is agreed upon, the question of what history to teach looms large.

ample, the American public and many American corporations have placed disproportionate blame on the public school system for failing to properly train workers to compete in the emerging 'global economy.' While this criticism has had the positive effects of introducing more rigor into math and science curriculums and of improving test scores, it has also redirected attention from the original notion of public education as training for citizenship within a democratic state. With concrete evidence such as a 1978 NAEP (National Assessment of Educational Progress) report that cites a decline in civic knowledge among high school age students,<sup>8</sup> it is no wonder that the infamous 1983 *A Nation at Risk* report (authored, in part, by former Yale President A. Bartlett Giamatti) contains the admonition that, "the educational foundations of our society are being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a Nation and a people."<sup>9</sup>

There are several changes in public education that would help prevent the dire (though perhaps exaggerated) consequences foreseen by the authors of *A Nation at Risk*. Significantly, the most profound of these changes enjoy a large degree of public support. A 1994 survey found that 83% of all Americans favor some sort of national curriculum guidelines, 73% believe that passing nationalized standard examinations should be required for grade advancement and graduation, and, most importantly, 63% agree that more emphasis on U.S. history

and government is needed in the secondary schools.<sup>10</sup> Although these statistics signal agreement with vague reform ideas rather than specific proposals, they do indicate ample electoral support for educational reform. Furthermore, evidence exists that such an increased emphasis on U.S. history in public schools brings about some of the desired citizenship effects. A 1994 study indicates that students who go to a high school that offers U.S. history, government, or civics courses display more "political tolerance" (defined by the researcher to mean a greater understanding of and tolerance for other beliefs).<sup>11</sup>

The most fundamental components of educational reform are to reduce some of the power of individual local school districts and to set educational standards at the state level which are enforced and measured by standardized examinations. A prime example of this system is that of the New York State Board of Regents, which sets the norms for material that is taught in the foundation courses (history, English, mathematics, foreign language, and science) in all public schools. For purposes of comparison, the State of Connecticut does not have such a statewide educational body that sets and regulates standards; consequently, the curriculum is entirely set, and achievement solely measured, at the school district level. A system of statewide standards would generally raise academic standards by holding all students accountable to a single, commonly known set of criteria





## LEARNING TO BE AN AMERICAN

while allowing for a level of flexibility that a national curriculum would not.

Once the necessity of increasing the emphasis on U.S. history in public schools is agreed upon, the question of what history to teach looms large. In recent years this problem has become deeply divisive, as witnessed by the rejection by the U.S. Senate of a proposed set of American history "guidelines" for secondary schools. Some school districts have adopted "Afro-centric" curricula, which place Africa at the center of all relevant political and social innovations over the last several thousand years. Certainly, the history taught in public schools should neither deny critiques of America's past nor ignore the relevance of other facets of American's diverse history. However, any history of America must begin with America's European roots in the Reformation, the Enlightenment, and the changing demographics and economics of early modern Europe. After establishing this foundation, the history that is taught must confront two realities that went largely unrecognized by history educators before the 1960s. The first is that Western European institutions were profoundly changed by the interaction with and incorporation of other cultures and races in American society, and that the America that exists today is a product of those interactions. The second is the sometimes painful admission that while America has generated many high ideals, it has not always lived up to them. Fundamentally, any honest history cur-

riculum has to admit to students that history is not a set of concrete facts and statements to be memorized, but rather a debatable set of interpretations that exist within the framework of available evidence.

Thomas Jefferson wrote over two centuries ago that, "Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty," and the meaning of his statement has changed with the times. When America was founded, democratic government was an aberration. Today, almost every major world power is a democracy and nearly all nations maintain some pretense of being democratic. Although the philosophical debate over whether individuals have the capacity to govern themselves will probably never be settled, in a practical sense it is safe to say that the American experience of the past 220 years has proved the potency of this concept. As this question shifts into the background of our political life, a new one shifts to the fore. The question is no longer whether individuals can govern themselves, but whether various ethnic and cultural groups can succeed in maintaining a unified state committed to democratic ideals. The collapse of multiethnic states across the globe, such as the USSR (and now even Russia), Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, and Rwanda, and the success of ethnically homogeneous states such as Japan raises questions as to the ability of multi-ethnic, democratic states to maintain their cohesiveness under changing conditions. A return to the original emphasis on public education as a means of training citizens would likely have

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*History is a debatable set of interpretations that exist within the framework of available evidence.*



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American society is not held together by the ties of a common religion or a common ethnicity, it must find unity through the knowledge of a common history.

the effect of increasing the value of public discourse and involvement. As the authors of *A Nation at Risk* contend, "[a] high level of shared education is essential to a free, democratic society and to the fostering of a common culture, especially in a country that prides itself on pluralism and individual freedom."<sup>12</sup> Because American society is not held together by the ties of a common religion or a common ethnicity, it must find unity through the knowledge of a common history and through a desire for a common future.

<sup>1</sup> Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, trans. Richard Crawley, revised T.E. Wick (New York: Random House, 1982) III, 82.

<sup>2</sup> Thucydides, III, 84.

<sup>3</sup> Lorraine S. and Thomas L. Pangle, *The Learning of Liberty* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1993) 92.

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research, 1995 *Digest of Educational Statistics* (NCES 95-029) (Washington: Department of Education) 9 Fig 3.

<sup>5</sup> U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research, 1.

<sup>6</sup> David Berliner and Bruce Biddle, *The Manufactured Crisis: Myths, Fraud, and the Attack on America's Public Schools* (Reading, Mass: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., 1995) 217-235.

<sup>7</sup> U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research, 32 table 27.

<sup>8</sup> E.D. Hirsch, Jr., *Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987) 7.

<sup>9</sup> National Commission on Excellence in Education, *A Nation at Risk: A Report to the Nation and the Secretary of Education* (Washington: G.P.O., 1983).

<sup>10</sup> Stanley and Rose L. Elam and Alec Gallup, "The 26th Annual Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes towards the Public Schools," *Phi Delta Kappan* September 1994. Online, Nexis 17 October 1996.

<sup>11</sup> Richard A. Broday, "1994 Secondary Education and Political Attitudes: Explaining the Effects of the 'We the People Curriculum,'" Final Report October 1994; Stanford University, Palo Alto, CA. Online, <http://www.primenet.com/NCCE/attitudes.htm/>

<sup>12</sup> National Commission on Excellence in Education, 7.

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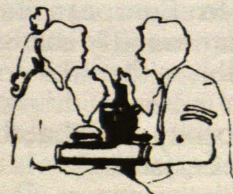
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# The American Muslim Political Renaissance

## Elise Aymer

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On Labor Day weekend this year, more than 1,000 American Muslims gathered in Columbus, Ohio as delegates to the 33rd annual conference of the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA). The Columbus convention offered a place for Muslims from a range of backgrounds across the United States and Canada to come together to network, organize, and educate each other on the role that Islam could or should play in American life. The ISNA conference drew attention to the injustices committed against ethnic, racial, and religious minorities, to the need to recognize and combat media bias in the portrayal of Muslims, and to secure for the Muslim constituency a larger measure of political representation and visibility. Acting practically on its stated intentions, the conference was successful in registering many Muslim voters for the upcoming elections. Khaled Saffuri of the American Muslim Council states the movement's goals: "We are part of America, and like every other minority in this country we have also interests for our community. We deserve a place on the political map."<sup>1</sup>

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The wave of political activism marked by such events as the ISNA conference has resulted in an increase in the number of Muslim organizations and in an intensification of their political outreach efforts. "If you compare American Muslim groups ten years ago to Muslim groups now, you will see a world of difference," attests ISNA president Abdullah Idris Ali. "This is like an Islamic Renaissance we are experiencing for American Muslims. There are so many groups doing effective work and we have become more unified as a whole."<sup>2</sup> The growth of advocacy groups has resulted in a situation in which individual Muslims, more aware of their entitlements as American citizens, are more inclined to participate in electoral politics. In order to increase Muslims' participation in politics, activists have had to overcome misperceptions about politics common in the Muslim community and a hesitance to vote among immigrant Muslims.<sup>3</sup> Muslim activists have had to combat organized opposition to their efforts from groups like the Tablighi Jamaat and the Salafiyya which maintain that Muslims should concentrate on practicing and disseminating Islam, and that taking part in American politics is tantamount to buying into a morally bankrupt society.<sup>4</sup> "Some

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people think that one can distance himself or herself from the process. But philosophically speaking, it is not possible. The process will assimilate you, and then adopt you, and then change you to its own objective. Even if you are ideologically very well indoctrinated, you will have to make compromises here and there," says ISNA associate Tariq Qureishi.<sup>5</sup> However, such viewpoints are now out of vogue in a Muslim community realizing the first fruits of political activity.

Muslims, like many other minority groups in the U.S., must contend with a fundamental size disadvantage in their struggle to make their voices heard. The estimated 3-6 million Muslims in the United States form approximately 0.5% of the country's adult population. However, a cohesive Muslim political agenda is difficult to achieve due to the diversity of race and income that marks the American Muslim community. African-Americans (accounting for some 40%) and South Asians, mainly from Bangladesh, Pakistan and India (accounting for 25%) make up the bulk of the American Muslim population. About 12% of the Muslims currently living in America are of Arab origin, with the remaining Muslims hailing from West Africa to Southeast Asia to the former Central Asian and West Asian Soviet Republics.<sup>6</sup>

Due to the community's range of ethnic, economic, social, and racial backgrounds, it is no surprise that American Muslim political perspectives are as diverse as the community itself. "There is

absolutely no such thing as a monolithic Muslim voting bloc," Salam Al-Marayati, the director of the Los Angeles-based Muslim Public Affairs Council, makes clear.<sup>7</sup> Most notably, Muslims disagree on the relative importance of U.S. foreign policy as opposed to domestic issues, such as education. A divergence of opinion often distinguishes recent Muslim immigrants and their non-immigrant African-American counterparts. In foreign policy, high-profile international issues tend to galvanize immigrant Muslims, while domestic issues dominate the African-American Muslim political agenda.<sup>8</sup>

The domestic issue debates which engage American society as a whole—such as that on education—also preoccupy American Muslims. While education has been posed as an important "across-the-board" concern for American Muslims, Muslim organizations have been unable to arrive at a consensus on the flaws of the American educational system and possible remedies. Many urban African-American Muslims support increased government aid to public schools, while their suburban, white-collar South Asian and Arab counterparts favor school voucher programs.<sup>9</sup>

Muslims, in keeping with traditional Islamic teachings, are usually conservative on moral issues. Muslims in America tend to oppose abortion and homosexual rights and espouse some version of the "family values" so often touted by American conservatives.<sup>10</sup> However, many Muslims feel caught between the two major





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political parties. According to Sulayman Nyang, an African studies professor at Howard University and a frequent commentator on Muslim issues, "Muslims are Republicans on family values, but Democrats on social welfare."<sup>11</sup> A poll conducted last August by the Council on Islamic-American Relations reveals that civil and human rights issues, abortion, education and welfare reform, antiterrorism legislation (considered to be prejudicial towards Muslims) and U. S. foreign policy (particularly in hot spots such as Bosnia) arouse the sharpest anxieties among American Muslims.

Aside from matters of government policy, American Muslim political activists strive to combat popular stereotypes of Islam and Muslims. The daily incidence of discrimination, harassment and scapegoating that continues to afflict American Muslims illustrates the disrespect accorded to Islam and followers in America. Muslims, in response, have been far from passive as they confront the issue of discrimination. The files of political organizations such as the American Muslim Council, the Council on Islamic American Relations, and the Muslim Public Affairs Council overflow with complaints of discrimination and harassment lodged by Muslim citizens. In response, American Muslim organizations have strongly encouraged victimized Muslims to file discrimination claims and report hate crimes. Working in tandem with citizens' services, advocacy groups have assumed much of the burden of

creating an environment in which the harassment of Muslims is no longer tacitly accepted. This project has as its orienting goal nothing less than the affirmative redefinition of the public image of Muslim people, and, as such, involves an array of coordinated strategies. Media-watch groups monitor news organizations, advertisers, and film-makers for possible bias in their depiction of Muslims and of Islam. In addition, public relations campaigns promote alternative positive models of American Muslims which are neither exoticized nor threatening.

All of this political activism aims at securing a place in American society for Muslims. "We shouldn't have to choose between being Muslim and being American," states Salam Al-Marayati.<sup>12</sup> Muslim activists, who assert American Muslims' rights to both their Muslim and American identities, face a challenge in an America where everything from commercials to movies to airline profiling reinforces Muslim otherness. For example, the terrorists in the blockbuster 1994 Arnold Schwarzenegger movie "True Lies" are not only Arabs but crazy Muslims as well. "If Schwarzenegger's character wore jeans instead of a tux, carried a six-gun instead of a Beretta, rode a palomino instead of a Harrier jet, and killed redskins wearing feathers instead of brownskins wearing beards, we'd have a classic (and racist) cowboy and Indian movie," write Don Bustany and Salam Al-Marayati.<sup>13</sup> Although the days of exploitative cowboy and Indian movies may be over, the stereotyp-

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ing of Arabs and Muslims in popular culture continues.

Unfortunately, films and commercials are not the only mechanisms by which American Muslims are made to feel unwelcome and un-American. "People are afraid of me. They think that maybe I have a big rifle or something in my purse," laments Shagufta Ahmad, 22, a student at Santa Clara University in California who wears hijab.<sup>14</sup> For many non-Muslim Americans, Muslim women who wear hijab (outfits that range from a head scarf and loose clothing, to an all-encompassing veil that lets only the eyes show) are not only threatening but also symbols of the oppressive nature of Islam. However, many of these women who wear hijab as an expression of their Muslim identities or because they interpret it as a Koranic mandate are targets for those who would lash out at Muslims. For example, Muslim women have lost jobs or have not been hired because they wore hijab.

American Muslims have learned that suspicion, in the aftermath of domestic terrorism, does not fall on all citizens equally. In the wake of the Oklahoma City bombing, the FBI initially targeted Muslims as suspects. Though the bombing suspects turned out to be non-Muslims, the American Muslim community became a scapegoat for America's anger. "For one-and-half days, all the fingers were turning to point toward Muslims," recounts Maher Hahtout, a Los Angeles cardiologist and Muslim activist. "It was a major exposure of the

THE YALE POLITICAL MONTHLY  
prejudices in this country."<sup>15</sup> For many Muslims, the discrimination lasted longer—various Muslims were beaten, verbally assaulted, threatened, and even knifed, and in one instance a Muslim was shot in the wave of outrage following the bombing.<sup>16</sup> Some Muslims found that co-workers and neighbors turned a cold-shoulder toward them without evidence that Muslims were involved in the Oklahoma City bombing. Mosques were burned and defaced, imams threatened, and hijab-wearing women harassed in the streets.<sup>17</sup> The violent reactions that Muslims experienced are not as surprising when one considers that an estimated 29% of Americans believe that Islam poses a security threat, according to a Los Angeles-based Times-Mirror poll.<sup>18</sup> However, one practical consequence of the spate of violence has been to educate Muslims about their statutory rights and the means by which they can pursue grievances. In fact, the current Muslim political establishment may owe its cohesiveness to crises such as the Oklahoma City bombing.

While the work of dispelling the troubling aura of foreignness and threat will require years, if not decades, Muslim advocacy groups have achieved success in forming concrete political contacts with the current administration. In February 1996, First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton hosted an Eid-al-Fitr White House dinner which she proclaimed "an American event" both "historic and overdue."<sup>19</sup> Two-hundred Muslim men, women, and children attended the dinner to





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mark the end of the Holy Month of Ramadan. The Eid dinner represented the first time in American history that a First Lady played hostess to a Muslim celebration, and Muslims considered the event a significant public relations victory. "We have asked [other administrations] before for recognition of the Eid, but our request always went unanswered," said Khaled Saffuri of the American Muslim Council which sponsored an *iftar* (daily breaking of the fast) dinner with four U.S. congressmen during the month of fasting. Mrs. Clinton's widely publicized trips to the Muslim world, including Pakistan, Turkey and Bosnia, have also won approval from American Muslims.<sup>20</sup> "Regardless of whether you agree with Clinton or not, you have to admit he has given Muslims more respect than they have ever received from a president," states Saffuri. The recognition American Muslims have received from the Clinton administration stands in stark contrast to the Bush and Reagan administrations' condemnations of Islamic fundamentalism, which Muslims say triggered an anti-Muslim backlash.<sup>21</sup>

President Clinton, however, has not gone uncriticized in American Muslim circles. In response to the World Trade Center, Oklahoma City and Olympic Park bombings and the suspicious explosion of TWA Flight 800, the Clinton administration has formulated a set of proposals designed to tighten aviation safety. In September, the administration unveiled a measure that many U. S. Muslims consider

discriminatory. The plan's effectiveness hinges on a procedure known as passenger profiling, which places flyers into various "risk groups" on the basis of their background and criminal history. Muslims, as part of this process, are viewed as inherently suspect. These new guidelines caused an uproar in an American Muslim community unjustly accused whenever an incident of domestic terrorism occurs. "To adopt that policy is alarming. When we go to the airport we want to check our luggage not our civil rights," said Nihad Awad, CAIR's executive director.<sup>22</sup>

Many Muslims dissatisfied with the administration's foreign policy in the Middle East claim that the Clinton White House is biased in favor of Israel. For many American Muslims, the Clinton Administration's relationship with Middle East players color Muslim perceptions of the American government as a whole. "President Clinton is beyond the pale on this one for Muslims," says Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad, professor of Islamic and Middle Eastern history at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. "A great many Muslims believe the American government is anti-Muslim."<sup>23</sup>

American Muslims have overcome formidable obstacles in their struggle for political enfranchisement. However, the journey is far from over. There are currently only fifteen Muslim elected officials, according to the American Muslim Council.<sup>24</sup> Most of these elected Muslims are state representatives, aldermen and mayors; there is not

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yet descriptive representation for Muslims at the federal level. In addition to supporting Muslim politicians, Muslims must continue to battle pervasive stereotypes, to forge alliances with other sectarian groups such as American Jews and the Christian Right, and to channel resources into political causes through lobbying and endorsements of non-Muslim candidates. As concluded by Salam Al-Marayati, Muslims remain largely outside the political mainstream: "We're not at the table yet. We still have to earn our right to sit at the table."<sup>25</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Lori Sharn, "Muslims Want a Place at Political Table: U.S. Activists Are Organizing, Registering and Energizing Voters," *USA Today* 23 August 1996: 4A.

<sup>2</sup> "American Muslims Learning to 'Play the Game,'" *Moneyclips* 10 Septemeber 1995, online, Nexis, 1 November 1996.

<sup>3</sup> Sharn, 4A.

<sup>4</sup> Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad, ed., *The Muslims of America*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991) 112-113.

<sup>5</sup> Haddad, 113.

<sup>6</sup> Ira Rifkin, "Muslims and the Ballot Box: Party Ties Nothing Sacred for Believers in America," *Dallas Morning News* 17 August 1996: 1G.

<sup>7</sup> Rifkin, 1G.

<sup>8</sup> Rifkin, 1G.

<sup>9</sup> Rifkin, 1G.

<sup>10</sup> Rifkin, 1G.

<sup>11</sup> Rifkin, 1G.

<sup>12</sup> Elise Aymer, personal interview, 3 September 1996.

<sup>13</sup> Salam Al-Marayati and Don Bustany, "Hasta la Vista, Fairness: Media's Line on Arabs," *Los Angeles Times* 8 August 1994: F3.

<sup>14</sup> Tanya Schevitz Wills, "Special to the Examiner," *The San Francisco Examiner* 11 October 1993: A8.

<sup>15</sup> Gustav Niebuhr, "Effort by Experts to Help Congress Understand American Muslims," *New York Times* 20 May 1995: 1.10.

<sup>16</sup> "American Muslims Learning to 'Play the Game.'"

<sup>17</sup> American Muslims Learning to 'Play the Game.'"

<sup>18</sup> Salam Al-Marayati, "The Rising Tide of Hostile Stereotyping of Islam," *The Washington Report on Middle East Affairs* June 1994: 27.

<sup>19</sup> "News in Brief," *The Washington Post* 24 February 1996, online, Nexis.

<sup>20</sup> Gene Gibbons, "U.S. First Lady Burnishes Image on European Trip" Reuters North American Wire, 1 April 1996.

<sup>21</sup> Salam Al-Marayati, "The West's Misperceptions of Islam," *Christian Science Monitor* 27 January 1991: 19.

<sup>22</sup> Peter Sisler, "Muslims Concerned with Air Safety Plans," *United Press International* 13 September 1996, online, Nexis, 1 November 1996.

<sup>23</sup> Rifkin, 1G.

<sup>24</sup> Deborah Kovach Caldwell, "Muslims Seek Greater Role in American Politics," *The Dallas Morning News* 2 March 1996: 1A.

<sup>25</sup> Rifkin, 1G.



# Revolution Misdiagnosed: Michael Lind on the 'Rebirth' of the Right Sunny Chu

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*Up From Conservatism: Why the Right is Wrong for America.* By Michael Lind. 295 pp. New York: The Free Press. \$23.00

At times during the 1996 Presidential campaign, the two candidates appeared remarkably alike. For example, both tried to woo the middle class with promises of tax cuts, tax credits, and tax reforms. In response, critics such as Michael Lind have pointed out that the affluent would be the disproportionate beneficiaries of such policies. The probable result, a more uneven distribution of wealth in America, inspires Lind's new book, *Up From Conservatism*. The author claims that a "political overclass" has been deceiving the American electorate with 'wedge issues' such as affirmative action and welfare reform which effectively mask the self-serving fiscal and political agendas of overclass politicians. The resulting policy debate ignores issues with class dimensions, substituting in their place racial and cultural concerns. According to Lind, this "strengthens cultural radicals on the left against middle and working-

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class union liberals, at the same time that it increases the clout of Wall Street conservatives at the expense of Main Street conservatives on the right."<sup>1</sup> While politicians may seem like they are trying to reach out to all Americans, either party's platform, if enacted, would benefit only a small minority of the electorate.

The notion of the "overclass" employed by Lind was originally conceived by the Swedish sociologist Gunnar Myrdal, and is defined by Lind as encompassing "the managerial-professional elite, consisting of Americans with advanced degrees and their spouses and children."<sup>2</sup> According to the author, the rise of the political overclass cannot be separated from broader changes in political demographics. For example, Lind charges the Grand Old Party with retaining little, if any, of its former grandeur. Far from articulating a progressive vision for the nation, it has received a windfall in the form of internal conflict within the Democratic camp. This opportune rift formed when George McGovern and the radical left upended the New Deal coalition created by Franklin Roosevelt and his followers. As a reaction to the ascendance of radicals in the Democratic party, a new

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brand of liberal was born—the socially moderate and economically conservative neoliberal as embodied by President Bill Clinton.

Unfortunately, these 'New Democrats,' the vast majority of which are members of the overclass, have abandoned the redistributive programs favored by many working-class Democratic voters. Likewise, the Republican Party has lost touch with many of its traditional constituents; in recent years it has become increasingly southernized, extremist, and fragmented. The result, far from a harmonious synthesis of viewpoints, has been a contentious radicalization of the party and a shift of its center:

For the foreseeable future, the honorable name of conservatism is likely to remain the property of shifting coalitions of libertarians, racists, medievalists, Protestant Fundamentalists, supply-siders, flat-taxers, isolationists, gun fanatics, anti-Semites, and eugenics theorists.<sup>3</sup>

In today's fragmented political environment, the value of a big tent lies not in its philosophical consistency but in its election-year promise.

In support of his thesis, Lind cites various policies which have been dressed in populist garments by their proponents but which were constructed for overclass ends. For example, he indicts "foundation conservatives" for employing supposedly objective social science to peddle policies which are unlikely to benefit the average American: Although the initial neoconservative critique was formulated in response to the abuse of social science by the left, the greatest examples of the unholy union of

dubious data and radicalism in policy since the 1970s have been found on the right.<sup>4</sup>

Buzzwords such as 'supply-side economics,' 'the crisis in public education,' and 'the epidemic of illegitimacy' have been formulated by conservative politicians in conjunction with research commissioned by partisan think-tanks. In advocating such policies as tax cuts, school vouchers, and crackdowns on welfare for teenage mothers, overclass politicians on the right invoke questionable data to "prove" that their policies would resolve these crises. Instead, argues Lind, such claims are designed by overclass politicians in order to sell to the electorate policies that benefit the rich and well-educated few at the expense of the poorer, less-educated majority. The resulting shift in political discourse only further removes public attention from the increasingly unequal distribution of wealth in society. Indeed, this year, both candidates implied that government was taking money away from the middle class, ignoring the real and increasing trend of corporate downsizing.

Upon first glance, readers may assume that Lind's book represents a mere reaction against the deluge of political criticism currently emanating from the right, but closer scrutiny of his analysis dispels this judgment. His criticisms, while often stinging, do not reveal a liberal bent so much as a nostalgia for what he calls a "one nation," rather than a "one-class,"<sup>5</sup> conservatism. Such a political system would support color-blind, anti-discrimina-



## REVOLUTION MISDIAGNOSED

tory racial policies, a mixed economy with sensible entitlement programs, and a balanced defense budget that avoids simply feeding corporate largesse.<sup>6</sup> The moderate center, according to his historical assessment, must return and prevail because "the left and the right in the twentieth-century United States have both been consistently wrong."<sup>7</sup>

Lind's accusations should inspire further debate by providing a useful framework for political criticism. Do both parties indeed serve the interests of a narrow few? Is the present reality of special interests and rising PAC influence the patchwork destiny of our national politics? In an election where under 50% of eligible voters cast a ballot, one can only wonder what the demographics of this voting bloc looked like. Lind would probably be suspicious that the continued pattern of voter apathy only

strengthens the overclass.

Unfortunately, Lind is short on suggestions for how to change this state of affairs, and leaves readers on their own to determine the remaining political options. Still, this book is a compelling read as a result of its meticulous investigative reporting and witty style. Written with a skepticism that wisely eschews paranoia and conspiracy theories while pointing out insightful connections, Lind's articulate challenge to conventional thinking will intrigue readers of all political persuasions.

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1 Michael Lind, *Up From Conservatism: Why the Right is Wrong for America* (New York: Free Press, 1996) 44.

2 Lind 34.

3 Lind 70.

4 Lind 158.

5 Lind 44.

6 Lind 260.

7 Lind 261.

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*Is the present reality of special interests and rising PAC influence the patchwork destiny of our national politics?*

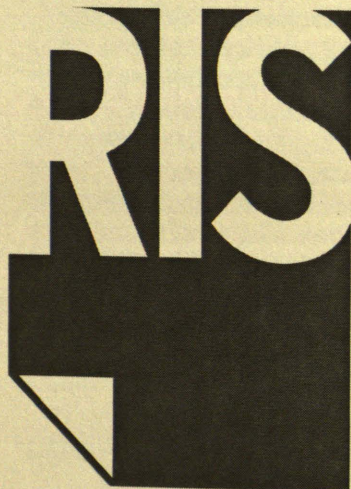


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